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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000632

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2012

TAGS: ASEC PGOV PINS NP

SUBJECT: SECURITY INCIDENTS IN RUN-UP TO NEPAL BANDH

REF: A. (A) KATHMANDU 604

1B. (B) KATHMANDU 592

Classified By: ARSO H.E. REX, REASONS 1.5 (B, D)

11. (U) A bomb exploded in the middle of a small bridge west of Kathmandu's historic Durbar Square March 29 at approximately 8:45 a.m. At least 26 people were injured in the blast, including four school children who were transiting the area, two of whom sustained serious injuries. There were no fatalities. No Americans were injured, and the area is not frequented by foreign tourists. The bridge itself sustained only minor damage and was reopened by noon.

12. (SBU) The Tankeswori is a narrow two-lane bridge over the Bishnumati River between Hanumandkocha and Tachachal. At that hour, the bridge is normally crowded with vendors, shoppers, pedestrians, and vehicles. According to witnesses, a few people on the bridge noticed a bundle of cloth lying on the footpath that raised suspicion. As the bystanders talked amongst themselves, three army personnel who were passing through the area in plain clothes overheard them, and began to clear the area. Soon thereafter, the explosive device detonated. According to police and RNA sources, the explosive was apparently in an empty paint can that had been placed next to a larger, similar container holding bricks and nails. Authorities suspect that the blast was triggered by a timer or possibly by remote control. Police have taken one person into custody.

13. (C) Comment: Unlike most of the explosive devices used by the Maoists in crowded areas of Kathmandu, this device appears to have been designed to spray shrapnel and cause casualties. Many previous "banner bombs" were simply wrapped in cloth or paper and designed to make noise. We suspect the explosion to be part of the Maoists' continuing campaign to terrorize the population into supporting the general strike they have called for April 2-6 (reflets). The Embassy will hold an EAC meeting the morning of April 1 to assess the security situation.

MALINOWSKI